

# **2017 Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference**

## **Consumer Panel Discussions: Voices from Riders**

### **Presenters**

- Barbara, MBTA User and Brookline TRIPPS Participant
- Paul and Wendy, SCM Elderbus
- Mark, PVTA Travel Training Program

### **Facilitator**

- Rachel Fichtenbaum, MassMobility

### **Introductions**

- Based on previous years feedback; request for a rider panel
- Open panel discussions from East to West regions of Massachusetts

### **MBTA User, Brookline TRIPPS Participant – Barbara**

- Uses the T if she is going into the city
- To Brookline; the bus or the van
- Fortunate enough to have the C line at the top of her street to Brookline; bottom of the street – bus line to Kenmore.
- Encourages other seniors in the community to understand there “is life after driving”
  - Takes the T to socialize, shop, library, etc.
  - “Do not have to stay home”
  - Cost effective; \$2 round trip
  - Tips:
    - Do not take it during rush hour. Difficulty to get a seat
    - Try and find exit strips
    - Relax, and enjoy the ride.
    - Always have your CharlieCard ready, takes it easier to access.
  - Has recently tried a new mode of transit; took a Lyft ride for the first time.
    - They were right in the curb waiting for her.
    - Completely, and calmly enjoyed the ride to her doctor’s office.

### **SCM Elderbus – Paul and Wendy**

- **Wendy:** Takes the Elderbus because she became ill and lost her eye sight in 2001
  - Was not aware the service existed for 2-3 years, not knowing how to get around
  - Finally found it via South County Transportation/Elderbus from Charlton
  - It has been a “Heaven send!” learning how the process works
  - Meeting the friendly staff/drivers.
  - Loves to chat with her friends at Elderbus!
  - She does not miss driving at all!
- **Paul:** Had been looking for transportation, as his mechanic told him he was driving a “moving coffin” (unsafe vehicle)
  - Spotted Elderbus at his local Price Chopper grocery store

- His wife had suffered a visual problem, lost most of her eyesight, and she could no longer drive
- They were introduced to a wonderful group of people at Elderbus
- Bothers him that most elderly people would rather stay home than utilize a service like Elderbus
- Where do they go?
  - Grocery shopping
  - Medical appointments
  - Extra things; trips to Walmart/garden shop
  - To the MassMobility conference!
- Feedback:
  - They don't have to wait long
  - It just takes the required work to organize
  - Sometimes they get the call back reminders, and had forgotten they needed to go that day.
- What would they tell someone they would like to use Elderbus?
  - That they send out the appropriate vehicle (with lift if needed)
  - It is door to door service
  - Very friendly atmosphere
  - Meet new people on the bus
  - Seeing old friends on the bus
  - The kindness of the drivers is a plus.
  - Keeps the feedback positive so friends and family will join her.
  - Safety: Has ADA compliant bars to climb the stairs of the bus.

### **Travel Training through PVTA – Mark**

- Goes to Berkshire Hills Music Academy
- Began travel training two years ago to learn to become more independent
- Lives in his own apartment
- Takes the trolley with his teacher
  - Knows how to get on the bus, and flag for stop
- Teacher decided he was ready to take PVTA
  - Worked with travel trainer
  - Routes, bus numbers, etc.
  - Signal drivers, transferring
  - Thought training was awesome
- Goes to Amherst, Starbucks and local museums
- Thankful for the travel training that has helped him become more independent

### **Q&A Session**

- Great travel trainer? What agency did they use to find it?
  - Used PVTA. Mark's teacher actually connected him to the travel trainer
  - Found his local stops and taught him how to board the bus and navigate
- Curious about Elderbus? Stops (fixed route) or demand response (wherever you need to go)?
  - Curb to curb service, not fixed route
  - Medical and community based

- Question for panelists or audience, how you came to learn about them? Suggestions how we can do a better job to educate?
  - Wendy: That is an important question, because it took her almost 3 years to find this service. Would love to be able to advertise or be an advocate. Word of mouth; needs to advertise more.
- When Mark is done with school, does he plan on continuing to learn to use public transit?
  - After graduation, he will participate in a program at the academy to continue to learn how to use the bus and go to new places.
    - Recently went to a concert at UMass, plans on going to more concerts in June
- If Barbara had a “wish list” on MBTA improvements, what would it be?
  - Tap station at both front and back of the cars/buses
  - Steps are rather steep (on the C line)
  - Some of the stations do not have accessibility for handicapped people (Hynes, Boylston, etc.)
  - Improve stations that are not handicapped accessible
- Aniko shared some thoughts:
  - Please attend the afternoon session re: improvements on making the system more accessible. Will not address each station, but global initiative to make progress on the stations, and making it more accessible
  - Commended the travel trainers in the room